

Teeth and breath / Thankfulness

Tammy: Here's a song for you. You probably know the tune, but listen to the words.

Every morning, every night,
Clean your teeth, and make them bright.
Put some toothpaste on your brush,
Brush them well and do not rush.
Up and down and in between,
Till your teeth are shiny clean.

Carol: Well, can you guess what we're going to talk about today?

Tammy: Hello friend. I'm Tammy and this is Women of Hope. Carol's here with me too.

Carol: Hello from me too. I did enjoy your little song, Tammy. Did *you* guess that we're talking about teeth today? We'll talk about looking after our teeth and how to have sweet breath.

Tammy: I have an elderly friend, named Elsie. She has the most beautiful smile. I said to her: 'Do you mind if I ask how old you are?' 'Of course I don't mind,' she answered. 'I'm 90 years old and I have all my own teeth!' 'That's remarkable!' I said, 'you must have taken good care of them.' 'Oh I did,' she said as she smiled that beautiful smile.

Carol: It's amazing because most people have trouble with their teeth and lose a few before they get that old.

Tammy: She must have taken good care of them carefully all her life! She knew it was important - so that she could chew with her *own* teeth!

Carol: Often people don't realize that their teeth are so important and need to be cleaned properly each day. Do you remember trying to get your children to clean their teeth properly?

Tammy: I sure do. Kids don't want to spend time on things like this. But it's worth helping them get into the habit of cleaning their teeth and doing it properly. Teach them while they still have their baby teeth, so they don't get gum disease.

Carol: Teeth *are* important. Most of us want to look good. We do the best we can to look smart with our clothes, our hair and sometimes by wearing a little bit of makeup. In fact, there's an old saying, 'You're never fully dressed without a smile. And a nice smile makes *anyone* look good, and for that we need to take good care of our teeth and gums.

Tammy: I've seen some people put their hand over their mouth when they smile, as if they're hiding their teeth. Perhaps they have stains or decay that they're trying to hide. Or they may have some teeth missing. Or maybe they do it because they have bad breath. Wouldn't it be good if they could just smile without hiding?

Carol: Oh it would be. Bad breath can make other people move away from you or turn their head away. And it really makes you feel really bad when that happens. But there are things you can do to help get rid of bad breath. Let's talk about some of the causes bad breath.

Tammy: A bad smell can come from your mouth for many reasons. It could be coming from your mouth because there's *food stuck between your teeth* or under your denture. When bacteria attack the bits of food that are stuck in your teeth it can smell bad. It can come from the *decay and germs* if you have a large hole in a tooth. And, *gum infections* can also cause bad breath, particularly infections around wisdom teeth at the back of the mouth.

Carol: We should clean our teeth at least twice a day and if we have bad breath we can give our teeth an extra clean at any time of the day. And when you brush, give your tongue a gentle brushing. This removes dead cells, bacteria and food debris. We can use toothpaste, or salt, or just water; that's better than nothing. If you can't clean your teeth because you're out somewhere, you can rinse out your mouth with water after you've eaten.

It's good to see a dentist regularly if you are able to. Twice a year is best but once a year is almost as good. If you have a toothache or you think you have a hole in a tooth see a dentist as soon as you can. The dentist might put a filling in the hole so it won't get bigger and your tooth won't hurt any more. Your dentist can help you if you have a gum infection too. If there's no dentist, go see your health worker.

Tammy: Sometimes bad breath comes from the lungs, especially for people who smoke cigarettes. Smoking uses up the oxygen in your mouth and that affects your breath. Even hours after the last cigarette your breath may smell of the smoke. People often suck mints to hide the smoke smell but this only covers it over a bit.

Carol: Eating strong flavored things like garlic and onions can give people bad breath as well, but it really doesn't last long. You might be surprised to know that garlic smells actually come from the lungs rather than the stomach. Another cause of bad breath is alcohol.

Tammy: Someone told me that having a dry mouth can cause bad breath. In fact, even too much talking can make your mouth dry and give you bad breath! So I keep taking sips of water to keep my mouth moist. I don't want Carol to turn away from me!

Carol: Tammy, you know some diseases and even some medicines can give you bad breath. Did you know that a doctor can sometimes tell a person what's wrong by testing or smelling their breath.

Tammy: Well, we've talked quite a lot about bad breath but what about stains and decay, or missing teeth. What can we do about those problems that might make us hide our smile?

Every morning, every night,
Clean your teeth, and make them bright.

Put some toothpaste on your brush,
Brush them well and do not rush.
Up and down and in between,
Till your teeth are shiny clean.

Clean teeth are so important. And they feel good!

Carol: They certainly are. We feel more confident about giving a big smile if our teeth are clean and healthy. Usually people see only the front teeth but our back teeth are very important too. We use our back teeth to chew our food. They also help to hold the shape of our cheeks and our whole face.

Your mouth can be healthy even if your teeth are not perfectly straight or all the same light color. Even if your teeth are a bit yellow, as long as they don't have decay and stains, they're still healthy. And if your gums are nice and pink, you have a healthy mouth. You can smile happily!

Tammy: So, let's start to help our family develop good habits. We should clean our teeth twice a day, with a toothbrush, and at least rinse our mouths after we eat.

Carol: And we should use toothpaste if we can. That helps clean the teeth *and* keeps our breath minty fresh. And don't forget: brush your tongue.

Tammy: If possible we should go to the dentist regularly to have our teeth checked. And if we have a toothache or a hole in a tooth we should go the dentist or the health worker as soon as possible.

We can avoid drinking alcohol and smoking or at least cut back on the amount we drink or the number of cigarettes we smoke. That will make our whole body more healthy!

Carol: Here are a few extra suggestions from the dentist.

Don't eat much sweet, sugary food, especially between meals.

Drink plenty of water.

Don't drink many sugary drinks like soft drinks, sodas, and fruit juices.

Tammy: We just wish we could see *your* lovely smile today. We've been talking about how to have healthy teeth and fresh breath. I feel very thankful that I can go to the dentist, and learn how to look after my teeth. And when I have toothache, I'm *very* grateful for my friend, the dentist!

Carol: Now we want to tell you a story about being thankful. Tammy and I heard this story from Kate. Kate is a Christian worker who went by herself to live in a poor country where there was lots of fighting, so she could help the women of that country. She made many friends there.

There were two women who often visited Kate. She would always stop and make them tea. They were not happy women; they always complained about their husbands, their neighbors, their children... their children's teachers... or the weather... it went on and on. One day, they drank one cup of tea after another and complained to Kate and their friend Asal.

Tammy: Well, as you can imagine Kate began to feel depressed. She thought, 'I have my own list of troubles. In this country I can't wear what I like, or eat what I like, or buy the things I want. I have to speak a language that's hard for me. I'm in danger every day. My friends and family are far away. I get sick too. But...it doesn't do me any good to think about my list of troubles.'

Carol: Instead, Kate had learned to choose to give thanks, to calm her heart and her mind. When she ate her breakfast she gave thanks for her coffee. Sometimes she was so tired and

discouraged, that she could only say thank-you for the fruit on the tree or for the birds that were singing. Other times she chose to give thanks for God's love, and her family who loved her, and the people who were kind to her. She thanked God for sending Jesus to save her from her sins.

Tammy: So Kate said to these women, and her friend Asal: 'Listen, we all have troubles. But it's not good for us to spend all our time thinking about what's bad. Let's go around our circle and take it in turns to thank God for one good thing he's given us.'

At first the women said there was nothing good in their lives. Kate challenged them 'God has given you nothing?' So they started.

'I thank God we have a house and food to eat.'

'I thank God my son is healthy and he can go to school.'

'I thank God that he sent rain this week.'

'I thank God my husband is a good man.'

'I thank God for my friend.'

'I thank God I have another day to live.'

Carol: Well, they kept going, each one finding something else to thank God for, until they were all smiling. It's good to give thanks; it's good for our souls. It reminds us that everything is not bad, and that God is good. God tells us in his word, the Holy Bible, to give thanks in every situation. That's not because God needs us to thank him. It's because God knows that it's *good* for us to have thankful hearts.

Kate suggested to the women say what they were thankful for every day. But the two complaining women didn't want to do that; they just complained about the strange foreigner. But the other woman, Asal, decided to try being thankful every day.

Tammy: Six months later, Kate sat with another group of women, who were also complaining, Kate agreed they did have hard lives, then she made the same suggestion: 'Let's thank God for something.' The women laughed. They thought 'Kate's a foreigner, what could she know about our lives?'

But, Asal was there too, and she spoke up, 'I used to be angry all the time. I didn't want to marry my husband, but my family forced me. Then I lost three babies who were stillborn. My husband and I fought all the time, and I would stay angry for a long time. Then our foreign friend suggested

that I should stop and thank God for what he's given me. At first it didn't make sense. I thought, God already knows what he's given me.

But then I thought, 'What can it hurt? I'll try it.' So I started thanking God. I thanked him for the two children that lived. I thanked God that the husband I didn't choose is a kind man. I thanked God my mother recovered from a heart attack.

Now every day I try to stop and thank God for what he's given me. I'm not angry any more. I used to be angry all the time, but I'm not any more. My husband and I hardly ever fight, but we laugh more, and our children are happier.'

Carol: The women sat quietly. Here was something true and beautiful, and it wasn't coming from the foreigner, it was from their own neighbor, who had been through the same fighting and hard times that they had been through. As they listened, it was like new seeds were planted in their hearts. Seeds of thankfulness, and a new thought about God; he cares for me, just one ordinary woman. And Kate silently prayed that those seeds would grow in their hearts.

Tammy: Did you think about things you could thank God for? I did. God has given us so many things. Today I'm especially thankful for my children and my loving husband.

Carol: I'm very thankful that I can spend this time with you. God has given me this opportunity to share the hope that God has given me.

Tammy: I'm most thankful that God loves me, and that he forgave me for the wrong things I've done. I'm so thankful that he saved me.

Carol: And I am truly thankful that God is always with me because his Holy Spirit lives inside of me.

Tammy: Kate wasn't the first person to make a list of reasons to give thanks. There is a Psalm, or poem, in the Bible, where the writer said, 'Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, his love lasts forever.' (Ps 136) Then the writer listed a whole page of things that God did, reasons why he was thankful! Why don't you make a list like that?

Carol: When you *feel* thankful, it's really good to say 'thank you'. We should do that more often, I think. Say 'thank you' to our family and friends, and the people who help us in our lives every day. Let them know that we appreciate what they do for us.

Tammy: And we certainly should say 'thank you' to God. Do you remember the story we shared with you about the ten men with leprosy? Let's hear this story again briefly from God's word about the day they met the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Jesus was walking along the road, at the edge of a village. Ten men with the skin disease of leprosy came by. They were not allowed to come close to other people...as they were afraid of catching the disease. They stood back and called out loudly, 'Jesus, Master, have pity on us!' Jesus said, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.' That was what their law commanded, for anyone who had been healed of leprosy.

Carol: Well, the ten men turned to go to the priests, and then they saw that their leprosy was gone! One of them, when he saw that he was healed, ran back, praising God loudly. He knelt down at Jesus' feet and thanked him. This man was a Samaritan, from another country. Jesus said, 'There were ten men healed, weren't there? Where are the other nine? Why is this foreigner the only one who came back to give thanks to God?' And then he spoke kindly to the man and sent him on his way. (Luke 17:11-19)

Tammy: What do you think about that? God blessed all ten of them, but only one said thank you. Do you think you would be one of the nine, or would you stop and give praise to God? I think this is an important lesson for our lives, don't you?

Carol: As you begin to think about all the things you're thankful for maybe there is something you would like to share with us. If so, you can write to us in care of this station or at Women of Hope.

Tammy: The email address is twrwomenofhope@twr.org. That's twrwomenofhope@twr.org. Or if you've missed a program or want to hear one again, visit our website twrwomenofhope.org. Or visit our Facebook page. We are so thankful for you. We do hope you will be with us again. Have a great week filled with God's blessings.

Kate's story adapted with permission from 'In the land of blue burqas' by Kate McCord; Moody Publishers, Chicago, 2012.

Song 'Got my toothpaste' by Ellen Carr

